Memorial of Champlain

DISCOVERER OF MT. DESERT

1604-1904

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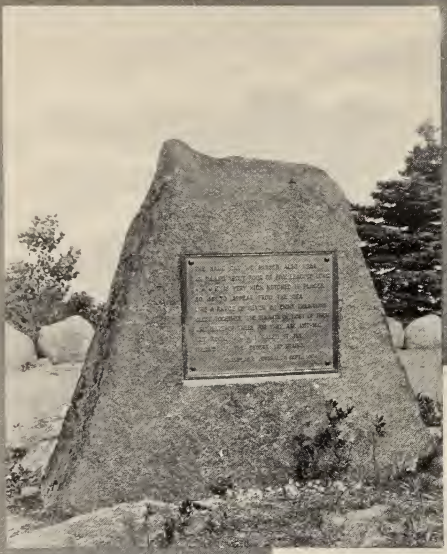

IN HONOR OF
SAMUEL DE CHAMPLAIN
BORN IN FRANCE 1567
DIED AT QUEBEC 1635
SOLDIER SAILOR EXPLORER
AND ADMINISTRATOR
WHO GAVE THIS ISLAND ITS NAME

MEMORIAL

OF

Samuel de Champlain

WHO DISCOVERED

THE ISLAND OF MT. DESERT

MAINE

September 5, 1604

PRIVATELY PRINTED

1906

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Introductory Note

THE Three Hundredth Anniversary of the discovery of the Island of Mount Desert was celebrated at North East Harbor September 5, 1904. Addresses were made in the Union Church by President Eliot, of Harvard University, and by Hon. Seth Low, late President of Columbia University.

Shortly afterwards a number of the summer visitors at North East Harbor and Seal Harbor contributed a sum sufficient for placing a moss-covered stone tablet, with suitable inscriptions, on a point of land east of Seal Harbor, which affords a fine view of the coast, from the Atlantic to the Western Way, the route followed by Champlain.

On the 18th of July, 1906, the contributors to the fund, and a few of their friends, assembled near the Memorial Stone and listened to a brief recital of the events connected with Champlain's voyage, by Rev. Samuel A. Eliot, D. D. The tablets were then unveiled by Wright Ludington, the youngest person present. President Eliot read the inscriptions, and added a few remarks upon the characteristics of Champlain. The verses which are here printed were then recited by the author of them, Rev. Professor William Adams Brown, of New York.

D. C. G.

Inscriptions

OBVERSE.

In Honor of
Samuel de Champlain
Born in France 1567
Died at Quebec 1635
A Soldier Sailor Explorer
and Administrator
Who Gave This Island Its Name.

REVERSE.

The same day we passed also near
an island about four or five leagues long.
* * * it is very high, notched in places,
so as to appear from the sea
like a range of seven or eight mountains
close together. The summits of most of them
are bare of trees for they are nothing
but rock. * * * I named it the
Island of the Desert Mountains.

Champlain's Journal 5 Sept., 1604.

Address by Rev. Samuel A. Eliot, D.D.

NEW ENGLAND was called New France for fifty years before Captain John Smith gave it its present name. Fifteen years before the Mayflower came to anchor in Plymouth Harbor its waters had been sounded and its outlines drawn by Champlain and his comrades. The Pilgrims, had they known of it, might have bought, ere they sailed, at a little shop in the Rue St. Jean de Beauvais in Paris, a chart of Plymouth Harbor remarkable for its accuracy and skill. Twenty-five years before John Winthrop and his company landed on the Peninsula where they planted Boston, these same Frenchmen had mapped the bay, described its features with surprising fidelity, and named its points and inlets.

The effort at French colonization in America found its impulse in the patriotic pride and chivalric spirit of that many-sided monarch, Henry the Fourth. This landfall at Mount Desert, which we celebrate today, connects itself directly with the revocation of the Edict of Nantes signed by Henry in 1598. That decree meant nothing less than the speedy return of commercial prosperity to France and the possibility of carrying out the King's ambition to make France a power on the sea and to promote adventure and dis-

covery and trade in distant lands. Several attempts at settlement in New France were made but nothing permanent was accomplished and in 1604 Henry commissioned a Huguenot gentleman, Pierre Du Guast, Sieur de Monts to head a colony, granting to him a monopoly of trade and vice-regal authority. De Monts associated with himself a number of merchants and adventurers and among them was the pilot-general of the French navy, Samuel de Champlain.

This man, whose word and valor this stone commemorates, was a true hero. Throughout a long and adventurous career he displayed a steadfast courage, a resourceful mind, a kindly heart, an indomitable patience. Though a devout Catholic he was extraordinarily tolerant in religion. Though strict in discipline he was considerate, just and merciful. Though his opportunities for education must have been scanty, yet he wrote and drew remarkably well, and there is a blitheness of mood about him, a friendliness of spirit, a quaintness of speech that must have made him a rarely good comrade and an inspiring leader.

Champlain was born in 1567, in the little town of Brouage, on the Bay of Biscay, some twenty miles south of La Rochelle. His father was a captain in the royal navy, and one of his uncles was a pilot in the king's service. Champlain was familiar with

boats from boyhood, and the sea laid a strong hold upon his imagination. In the dedication of one of his books he says: "Among the most useful and excellent arts navigation has always seemed to me to take the first place. In the measure that it is dangerous and accompanied by a thousand perils, by so much is it honorable and lifted above all other arts, being in no wise suitable for those who lack courage and confidence. By this art we acquire knowledge of various lands, countries, and kingdoms. By it we bring home all sorts of riches, by it the idolatry of Paganism is overthrown and Christianity declared in all parts of the earth. It is this art that has from my childhood lured me to love it, and has caused me to expose myself almost all my life to the rude waves of the ocean." When he enlisted in De Monts' expedition he was about thirty-seven years old. He had already made an adventurous journey to Panama and the Spanish main, and he had just returned from a voyage to New France and the River St. Lawrence.

De Monts sailed with his company in March, 1604, and after coasting along the shores of Nova Scotia and up into the Bay of Fundy, he chose as the site of the colony an island in the river which now bears the name which he gave to his settlement, Saint Croix. There the colonists passed the summer clearing the

ground, building their fort and setting up their houses, and early in September, after the ship that brought them had gone back to France to bring out reinforcements in the succeeding spring, Champlain took twelve of the men, together with two Indians, and set out on a voyage of discovery along the coast to the westward. They sailed in a big open boat which Champlain called a "patache." As depicted in Champlain's drawing of the St. Croix settlement this boat had a single lateen sail, but when the wind was ahead they used oars. Now let me quote Champlain's own narrative:

"Setting out from the mouth of the St. Croix and sailing westward along the coast, we made the same day some twenty-five leagues and passed by many islands, reefs, and rocks, which sometimes extend more than four leagues out to sea. The islands are covered with pines, firs, and other trees of an inferior sort. Among the islands are many fine harbors, but undesirable for permanent settlement.

"The same day (September 5, 1604) we passed near to an island some four or five leagues long, in the neighborhood of which we just escaped being lost on a rock that was just awash and which made a hole in the bottom of our boat. From this island to the mainland on the north the distance is not more than a hundred paces. The island is high and notched in

places so that from the sea it gives the appearance of a range of seven or eight mountains. The summits are all bare and rocky. The slopes are covered with pines, firs, and birches. I named it Isle des Monts Desert."

The next day the voyagers had a conference with some Indians who came out to meet them and who agreed to guide them to the Penobscot. They sailed up that river to the point where Bangor now stands and then passed out by Owl's Head, and continued west as far as the Kennebec. Then, as their provisions were running low, they ran back before the wind and arrived at St. Croix on the third of October, or just a month after they set out. When we consider what watchfulness is required in these days of light-houses, charts, buoys and beacons, to navigate among the numberless islands and sunken ledges of this ragged and fog-haunted coast, what shall we say of the seamanship and adventurous courage of the first pioneers.

The St. Croix colony did not endure, but the name of Champlain is writ large on this continent. For fortitude, devout serenity, and prudent zeal it would be hard to match this pioneer of New France. Champlain became the father of Canada and the bold explorer of the western wilds. He planted the fleur-de-lis on the rock of Quebec, and there on Christmas day of

1635 he died, striving to the last for the welfare of his colony and glad to draw his last breath in the wilderness, where, as he wrote, he had "always desired to see the Lily flourish and the true religion, Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman." We do well to commemorate this modest hero and his half-forgotten adventures on these coasts. His heroic monument stands fitly at Quebec, but this stone will remind many a fortunate sojourner here of the dauntless Frenchman, who first of white men, looked upon this favored island and gave to it the name it bears.

Lines by Rev. William Adams Brown, D. D.

To Champlain

If, from some eyrie in the distant sky,
  Thine eagle eye, still sweeping o'er the main,
  Upon this rock-bound coast should chance again,
Which first thy searching vision did descry;

Then shall this boulder, which to-day we raise,
  As messenger a silent greeting bring
  From the new friends whose later voyaging
Has found safe haven in these quiet bays.

Many fair gifts, bold courser of the seas!
  Thy laughing France with lavish hand has showered
  Upon this daughter of the West,—undowered
When first she knelt and clasped her sister's knees.

One gift France held, and lightly tossed aside,—
  A barren isle, sea-swept and tempest-driven;
  Its lonely hills unscaled, its rocks unriven
In that far day when thou didst pass in pride.

Desert the name thou gavest, great Champlain!
  Desert she seemed,—this island of our love;
  Yet in her dales the birches' silver grove
Reared its white columns for her sylvan fane.

By the bare rocks that buttress Sargent's crown
  The scarlet lily shamed the evening sky;
  While on the bosom of the lake hard by
Her snow-white sister nestled gently down.

From out these mossy glades, fern-canopied,
The orchid raised his purple-fringèd head,
And the shy twin-flower softly carpeted
The silent paths thou didst disdain to tread.

Desert the isle, such joys as these doth hold!
Nay, dauntless traveller, return once more!
The scenes so quickly left again explore,
And thou shalt see new graces still unfold.

No longer now the silent spaces yield
Such song alone as woodland minstrels raise;
Here Man with Nature joins his voice in praise
For wounds bound up and ancient sorrows healed.

Here shalt thou see in goodly fellowship
Ripe age with youth go laughing side by side
Down some long alley of the woods, where hide
Sweet treasures waiting for the eye and lip.

Across the bosom of this sparkling sea,
Through which of old thy piercing prow did glide,
Thou shalt behold white canvas swell in pride,
And on the breeze that blows so merrily

Shalt hear anon, if such thy happy chance,
Quick wit so lightly flash in quip and jest
Thou shalt transfer thine East unto our West,
And think thyself again at home in France.